

THE

LAST FLIGHT.

W. H. VENABLE.





THE LAST FLIGHT

BY

W. H. VENABLE

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CINCINNATI
ROBERT CLARKE & CO
1894



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THE LAST FLIGHT.

L O, in my path
A frozen song-bird lies ;
A victim of the sky's
Blind, elemental wrath.

The stolid year
Shall not in me repress
The impulsive tenderness
That moves a pitying tear.

A comrade I
Of such as wing the vast ;
Doomed, destined, at the last
Like this dead bird to die.

Needs must I mourn
Because thy tuneful flute .
Is broken now and mute,
Thou minstrel poet born.

THE LAST FLIGHT.

Sunned with the rose
 'Mid summer's gay delights,
 Have all thy merry flights
Sunk to this tragic close ?

Life's flutter o'er,
 Thy quavering heart, now still,
 No more shall throb and thrill,
Shall love and fear no more.

For thee, in vain,
 Next May shall deck the woods
 In nest-safe neighborhoods ;
Thou canst not build again.

Did instinct fail
 When, 'thwart thy migrant track
 Southward, the boreal rack
Sent down a hurtling gale ?

A cruel nest
 The feather-mocking snows !
 And ah, what gasping throes
Assailed thy dying breast.

THE LAST FLIGHT.

Wing-spent, alone,
 Adrift from every mate,
 Flung down by baffling fate,
Thou froze to the Unknown.

How saith the Word?
 Does He who governs all
 Take notice of the fall
Forlorn, of thee, poor bird?

And is it so
 His awful love divine
 Provides for me and mine
When frore the tempests blow?

Mute traveler, say,
 How fare we when we die?
 And whither do we fly
Along the unseen way?

Vain questionings
 In death's bleak eddy whirled!
 What heeds the other world
My broken, bleeding wings?

THE LAST FLIGHT.

Is life no more?

Is death the final doom?

Or shall the soul replume

Her flight and sing and soar?

Yea, surely, He

Who melts my love to tears

For this dead songster, hears

And pities mine and me.

His love must know

Our sorrow, and will lift

Our numbed lives from the drift

Of death's song-hushing snow.

SAGA OF THE OAK.

HOARSELY to the midnight moon
Voiced the oak his rugged rune:
“Harken, sibyl Moon, to me;
Hear the saga of the Tree.

I am scion of a line
Old, imperial, divine;
Earth produced my ancestor
Ere great Odin was, or Thor.

From the bosom of an oak
Fateful gods of Asgard spoke;
Minstrel sang and Druid prayed
In the dark fanes nature made.

Where the oaks of Mona stood,
Britain drowned her woe in blood:
Nourished thus the forest grew
Ships of war of oaken thew.

SAGA OF THE OAK.

Saxon warriors sail and sweep
Thundering o'er the stormy deep!
'Hearts of oak!' the bards exclaim,
Honoring my victorious name.

Annals treasured in the air
All the past to me declare;
In the ground the learned gnomes
Read to me their rocky tomes.

Roots of mine do feed on graves;
I have eaten bones of braves;
Every wind of heaven brings
Tribute to me on its wings.

I am proud and old and lone;
Subtile sorrow have I known,
Much of pity, much of pain.
Moon, the dead shall live again!

Oft the zig-zag lightning hath
Struck me with his fiery scath;
To my heart his thunders sped,
Yet I never bowed my head.

SAGA OF THE OAK.

I am weary of the years,
Overthrown are all my peers;
Slain by steel or storm or flame,—
I would perish too—the same.

Shall a king his fate lament?
Come what comes, I am content:
In my fiber nature saith
Life is good and good is death.

Mated birds of joyous spring
In my branches build and sing;
Grasses grow and blossoms bloom
Where I cast my shadow's gloom.

Happy children round me play;
Plighted lovers near me stray;
Insects chirping in the night
Thrill me with obscure delight.

All things are a part of me,—
Earth and air and moving sea;
I of all things am a part,
Stone and star and human heart.

SAGA OF THE OAK.

Thou, O Moon, triumphant, must
Pale and perish back to dust.
Who can teach thee more than I?
Moon, I tell thee, all things die!"

Spake no more* the hoary Oak.
No response the wan Moon spoke,
But the poet who had heard,
Pondered the Dodonian word.

AMAUROTE.*

SAFE in towery Amaurote,
Now I dwell;
From the tumbling sea, my boat,
Like a bell of foam afloat,
Up Anyder's reflux stream,
Voyaged well;
And I woke unto a dream
Realized, in realm remote,
Of Utopia.

Poesie, unerring guide,
Thrummed her lyre,
Charmful of the roaring tide,
Sang me o'er the billows wide,

* In Sir Thomas More's Utopia, the metropolis is Amaurote or Shadow City, on the Anyder or Waterless River.

AMAUROTE.

Till a gleam of pearly dome,
 Golden spire,
In the distance I espied ;
Then my soul foreknew its home
 In Utopia.

All was sooth as poets old
 Gave renown ;
All that seers and sages told
Fabling of an age of gold !
Towery Amaurote was there,
 Gleaming town !
Flushed in rosy light, behold !
Far away from every-where,
 In Utopia.

Visioned splendor reared from naught
 Rose sublime :
Beauty shaped, with glowing thought,
What Imagination brought
From the mystery of Man,
 And of Time ;
Heaven, pleased with Beauty's plan,
Smiled upon the works she wrought
 In Utopia.

AMAUROTE.

Have I eaten of the lote?

So its spell

Laps me that I here devote

Blissful hours, far remote

From the dreadful things that be?

Nay, I dwell

Where, o'er dream-deeps, Poesie

Guided in a foam-bell boat,

To Utopia.

SOVEREIGN.

FULL well my humbled heart remembers
The vow of rapture's lavish tongue,
For thee to smother grief's Decembers
In joy's June roses, and make over
The world, how easily, fond lover,
 Could I, when Life and Hope were young.

I dreamed that I, with love's dear guerdon,
 Might buy thy fate's Gethsemane ;
Might shed thy tears and bear thy burden ;
No shapes of care 'should near thee linger,
When troth-plight had begemmed thy finger,
 And God had given thee to me.

Thy aloe-drop should turn to honey ;
 Thy hand, unhurt, the thorn should hold ;
The dark should light thee, and the sunny

SOVEREIGN.

Celestial days, triumphal, singing
Along the sky should bless thee, bringing
Anew to earth the Age of Gold.

Methought that by the crown imperial
And regency thou didst bestow,
I could command the hosts sidereal,
The suns and planets in their courses,
Good angels and malignant forces,
High Heaven and the Shades below.

My lady, mused my soul in fervor,
Shall rule and reign all queens above;
My royalty shall throne and serve her,
And on her conquering bosom tender
Set love, the Kohinoor, the Splendor,
Light of illimitable love.

I for her grace pursuing glory
Would write on art's fair scroll my name;
Or pour her praise in song and story;
Or to make ripe her pride's fruition,
Ascend the sunned peak of ambition,
And pluck the alpine flower, Fame.

SOVEREIGN.

O glad delirium of passion!

What knew or recked my spirit then
Of deeds in less transcendent fashion -
Than youth's high drama realizes
In love's grand dreams and enterprises
That lift to godhood mortal men!

Naught is impossible to Heaven,
Nor to the potency of youth!
Imagination's quickening leaven
Works in the pulsing brain and being,
Till every sense hath second-seeing,
And all that should be true, is truth.

O glorious falsehood and illusion!
Call not the lover's transports lies;
The white light of his heart, in fusion,
Makes visible the far ideal,
Only the near earth seems unreal,
Secure the lover walks the skies!

I trod with thee the starry spaces,
I told the only tale I knew;
We lived in spirit, not in places,

SOVEREIGN.

And if the promises then spoken,
Be witness, oh my God, were broken,
The promising was Heavenly true.

I bow, my plumes of glory trailing ;
Not mine the puissance I dreamed ;
I ventured, losing ; struggled, failing ;
My victory was vain endeavor,
But thy brave love, applausive ever
The kingdom of lost hope redeemed.

Dear, than the hope of new life dearer,
My own, I bow low as thy feet ;
Sincere as erst, but not sincerer
Than when in amorous star-light golden
Thy love-kiss did my soul embolden
To be thy liegeman, Sovereign sweet.

I kneel to thee and make confession
As to an idol known divine ;
I ask for me thy intercession
With thy mild self, my gentle savior,
Atoning by serene behavior
For all the erring days of mine.

SOVEREIGN.

Forgive me that I offered gladness
 Outmeasuring the bliss of earth ;
That I not knew the robber Sadness
Steals into every pleasure palace,
That Sorrow holds her viewless chalice
 E'en to the laughing lips of Mirth.

I bend, I kneel thy subject loyal
 And true knight, whatsoe'er betide ;
Thy kiss, like alchemy made royal
My daring blood ; thy regal beauty
Exalts my powers to kingly duty,
 And mates my purpose to thy pride.

UNRECONCILED.

WHEN winter's loom of cloud
Weaves robes of snow
To wrap the hills in shroud,
My meditations go
Where shuddering tempests blow
Above a little grave.

When spring's pale wild flowers wake
Where sunbeams play,
Must not my full heart break?
Birds, blossoms, come with May,
Would that, some happy day,
My child could come again.

When air-built cloud-fleets sail
Blue summer's sky,
And violets exhale
Their fragrant souls and die,
My soul lifts Rachel's cry,
For, O, the child is not.

UNRECONCILED.

Most mournful time of all
Is when the leaf
Fades, withering to its fall,
Ending its term so brief,
Like him, my joy, my grief,
Lost in the senseless grave.

The new moons come and go,
Stars rise and set,
Time's healing waters flow
Across my wound, and yet
Grief can not pay love's debt,
Love's solace is to mourn.

All seasons and all days
Bring back to mind
His looks and winning ways,
Till tears unbidden blind
These eyes that fain would find
The dear one's vanished face.

IMMORTAL BIRDSONG.

WHAT though mine ear has never heard
The winged voice of the sky?
Nor listened to the love-lorn bird
Whose 'plaints in darkness die?

The poets have enskied for me
Lark-notes that never fail,
And made more sweet than sound can be
The song of nightingale.

I flutter Shelley's leaves, and hark!
The rush of sun-lit wings!
From dewy nest the English lark
Mounts heavenward, and sings.

Or dreaming o'er a magic book
Of Grecian choric plays,
Beyond Illissus' stream I look,
And catch far-warbled lays;

IMMORTAL BIRDSONG.

I hear, across the centuries
What Philomela sung,
In Attic groves, to Sophocles,
When Poesy was young.

A DIAMOND.

UPON the breast of senseless earth,
This precious, sparkling stone,
A jewel of Golconda's worth,
In matchless beauty shone.

My lady for a moment bore
The gem upon her brow,
A moment on her bosom wore ;—
'Tis worth the Orient now.

MY CATBIRD.

A CAPRICCIO.

NIGHTINGALE I never heard,
Nor the skylark, poet's bird ;
But there is an æther-winger
So surpasses every singer
(Though unknown to lyric fame),
That at morning, or at nooning,
When I hear his pipe a-tuning,
Down I fling Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth,
Shakespeare, too,—for what are bards worth,
When my *minus carolinensis*
(That's his Latin name)—
When my catbird wild commences
Song's hilarious rhapsody,
Just to please himself and me !

Prime cantante !
Scherzo ! Andante !
Piano, pianissimo !
Presto, prestissimo !

MR CATBIRD.

Hark! are there nine birds or ninety and nine?
And now a miraculous gurgling gushes
Like nectar from Hebe's Olympian bottle,
The laughter of tune from a rapturous throttle!
Such melody must be a hermit-thrush's!
But that other caroler, nearer,
Outrivaling rivalry with clearer
Sweetness incredibly fine!
Is it oriole, red-bird, or blue bird,
Or some strange, unAuduboned new bird?
All one, sir, both this bird and that bird,
The whole flight are all the same catbird!
The whole visible and invisible choir you see
On one lithe twig of yon green tree.
Flitting, feathery Blondel!
Listen to his rondel!
To his lay romantical,
To his sacred canticle.
Hear him lilting!
See him tilting
His saucy head and tail, and fluttering
While uttering
All the difficult operas under the sun
Just for fun;

MY CATBIRD.

Or in tipsy revelry,
Or at love devilry,
Or, disdainig his divine gift and art,
Like an inimitable poet
Who captivates the world's heart,
And don't know it.
Hear him lilt!
See him tilt!

Then suddenly he stops,
Peers about, flirts, hops,
As if looking where he might gather up
The wasted ecstasy just spilt
From the quivering cup
Of his bliss overrun.
Then, as in mockery of all
The tuneful spells that e'er did fall
From vocal pipe, or ever more shall rise,
He snarls, and mews, and flies.

FOUNDERS OF OHIO.

THE footsteps of a hundred years
Have echoed since o'er Braddock's Road,
Bold Putnam and the Pioneers
Led History the way they strode.

On wild Monongahela's stream
They launched the Mayflower of the West,
A perfect state their civic dream,
A new New World their pilgrim quest.

When April robed the Buckeye trees
Muskingum's bosky shore they trod;
They pitched their tent, and on the breeze
Flung freedom's star-flag, thanking God.

As glides the Oyo's solemn flood
So fled their eventful years;
Resurgent in their children's blood,
They still live on—the Pioneers.

FOUNDERS OF OHIO.

Their fame shrinks not to names and dates
On votive stone the prey of time ;
Behold ! where tower majestic States—
The Founders' monuments sublime.

EIGHTY-SEVEN.

A S a mighty heart in a giant's breast,
 With rhythmic beat,
Sends marching from brain to feet
The crimson vigor of creative blood,
So, in the bosom of the brawny West,
So, in the stalwart breast of the Nation,
Throbs the Great Ordinance,—a heart,
A vital and organic part,
 Propelling by its strong pulsation
The unremitting stream and flood
Of wholesome influences, that give
 Unto the body politic
The elements and virtues quick
 Whereby States nobly live.

WENDING WESTWARD.

A NEW star rose in freedom's sky
A hundred years ago;
It gleamed on Labor's wistful eye,
With bright magnetic glow.
Hope and Courage whispered, Go,
Ye who toil and ye who wait,
Opportune, in star-light, lo,
Open swings the People's gate!
Beyond the mountains and under the skies
Of the Wonderful West your future lies;
On the banks of the Beautiful River,
By the shores of the Lakes of the North,
There fortune to each will deliver
His share of the teeming earth.

Jocund voices called from the dark
Hesperian solitude, saying, Hark!

WENDING WESTWARD.

Harken ye people ; come from the East,
Come from the marge of the ocean, come !
Here in the Wilderness spread a feast,
This is the poor man's welcome home !
 Hither with ax and plow,—
 (Carry the stripes and stars),
 Come with the faith and the vow
 Of patriots wearing your scars
Like trophies upon the victorious breast,
 Noblemen—wend to the West.
Load your rude wagon with your scanty goods,
 And drive to the plentiful woods ;
Your wheels as they rumble shall scare
 The fleet-footed deer from the road,
And waken the sulky, brown bear
 In his long unmolested abode ;
The Redman shall gaze in dumb fear
 At the wain of the strange pioneer,
His barbarous eyes vainly spell
 The capital letters which tell,
 That the White-foot is bound
 For the hunter's green ground
 Where the buffaloes dwell.

WENDING WESTWARD.

To the Ohio Country, move on!
Bring your brain and your brawn,
 (Some books of the best,
 Pack into the chest!)
Bring your wives and your sons,
 Your maidens and lispings ones;
 Your trust in God bring;
 Choose a spot by a spring,
 And build you a castle—a throne,
A palace of logs—but your own!

Happy the new-born child,
 Nursed in the greenwood wild;
Though his cradle be only a trough,
 Account him well off;
 For born to the purple is he—
The proud royal robe of the Free!
For the latest time is the best,
And the happiest place is the West,
Where man shall establish anew
Things excellent, beautiful, true.

THE BUCKEYE TREE.

WHEN bluebirds glance the sun-lit wing,
And pipe the praise of dancing Spring,
Like some gay sylvan prince, and bold,
The Buckeye dons his plumes of gold.

When truants angle in the sun,
Or roam the wood with dog and gun,
How tuneful sounds the honeyed tree,
Hummed round by the melodious bee.

When boisterous Autumn dashes down
Imperial Summer's rustling crown,
Beneath the scattered spoils we find
The polished nut in bronzen rind.

The Buckeye broom, in times of yore,
Swept for the dance the puncheon floor;
The backwoods beaux, hilarious souls,
Quaffed sangaree from Buckeye bowls.

THE BUCKEYE TREE.

The friendly Buckeye leaves expand,
Five-fingered, like an open hand
Of trust and brotherhood the sign,—
Be welcome! what is mine is thine.

Historic, now, and consecrate,
The emblem of a loyal State,
A symbol and a sign, behold,
Its banners green, its plumes of gold.

Ohio's sons! their bugles sang,
Their sabers flashed, their muskets rang,
Forever unto freedom true
The Buckeye boys in Union blue!

PATER PATRIÆ.

O H, keep their memory green who led
A new-sprung nation's hope forlorn;
What blows they dealt! What blood they shed
To seal the vow their souls had sworn.

Once more I see them rise, as when
They rushed to arms with dauntless will,
Those bold, broad-breasted minute-men,
Whose volleys crimsoned Bunker Hill.

Can we forget their tattered clothes?
Their hungry eyes, their feet half bare,
That, bleeding, stained the cruel snows
In Valley Forge, the camp of prayer?

Behold their chieftain, whose bright name
Shines lambent now, a fadeless star,
Fixed in the exalted heavens of fame,
Where glory's constellations are.

PATER PATRIÆ.

That lustrous name is Washington's,
The symbol of heroic worth ;
His virtues patriots teach their sons
Wherever freedom treads the earth.

The Father of his Country ! Yes,
Stint not the measure of his praise ;
Great Lincoln's meed makes his not less ;
Grant's statue envies not his bays.

Seek not his peer in Rome or Greece ;
Napoleon yields the palm to him
Who first in war and first in peace,
Made crowned ambition's jewels dim.

An unperturbed, victorious man !
The signet of a valorous soul
Impressed on his calm brow, " I can."
Kings recognized his strong control.

Twice four-score fleeting years have sped,
Since for mankind this man was born ;
Such souls die not. He is not dead.
We celebrate his natal morn.

PATER PATRIÆ.

We celebrate this radiant day,
Which, in the twelvemonth's golden band
Sets like a gem of splendid ray,
And sparkles over sea and land.

All loyal hearts foreknow the time,
The birthday of our Washington!
Ring! joyous bells! in chorus chime!
Awake the echoes, morning gun!

Ye loud rejoicing trumpets bray!
Sound, piercing fife and throbbing drum!
While marching on in plumed array,
The gleaming ranks of soldiers come!

Now be the starry flags unfurled,
While war-remembering cannon boom,
Repeating to the listening world
The story of oppression's doom!

THE GREENFIELD WIZARD.*

TWO intermittent fountains start
From the deep well-springs of the heart;
And when the angel stirreth one
The sudden rills of pathos run;
And when he moves the other fount
The quickened floods of laughter mount.

An angel, with mysterious eyes,
Appareled in a hoosier guise,
(I entertained him unawares
At Vevay, in a room upstairs,
Of the old inn, yclept Le Clerc's),
A wizard with a wand of song,
How doth he sway the charmed throng!

Is he celestial or magician,
Greenfield's unannounced musician,
Playing with a heavenly art
On the lute-strings of the heart?

*James Whitcomb Riley.

THE GREENFIELD WIZARD.

Two things there are in heaven above
And earth below—the greater Love,
The lesser Death—and for the two
Spring heart's-ease, rosemary and rue,
And myrrh and moly, magic plants;
These Riley gathers from their haunts,
And he distills the subtle juice
To make a spell of potent use;
Filters a seeming simple wine,
Nectared with some drops most rare.
(How he finds the tinct or where,
Not the critics can divine.)
Whoso gives the wine his lips,
Sipping smiles, and laughing sips;
But, before he drinks it up,
Tears have trickled in the cup.

JAMES E MURDOCH.

ON HIS EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY.

FOUR score! That gallant stripling? No!
That passion-breathing Romeo,
Who climbed, last night, the garden wall,
Mocked by Mercutio's mad-cap call!

Four score? What, he? Charles Surface? Nay;
He is as young as blooming May;
You do but jest; I know him well—
Who can forget wild Mirabel?

Whatever the costume, forsooth,
The same inimitable youth!
Marked you the sables Hamlet wore,
Dark-plumed, in moonlit Elsinore?

JAMES E. MURDOCH.

Eighty? Believe the joke who can!
They "make him up" to play "old man;"
Pluck off the wig! Crow's feet erase!
And recognize wag Murdoch's face.

Nay; sober Time his card holds high,
And, swearing figures will not lie,
Adds up the years and proves his date;
See, in the ten's place, here, an eight.

So be it, Chronos, go thy ways;
Our friend grows old and full of days,
His frame may bend to Time's control,
But Time is servant to his soul.

King Thought sits regnant in his brain,
And there Queen Love shares equal reign,
So long as these the scepter hold,
The man is young, however old.

Mark, too, the everlasting truth,
That genius consorts still with youth;
Immortal are the young in heart,
And young are Poesie and Art.

JAMES E. MURDOCH.

He who the mighty Masters reads,
Himself to god-like power feeds;
Who bathes in Shakespeare's golden light,
Himself diffuses radiance bright.

So Murdoch; light and sweetness find
Acceptance in his genial mind;
Thence are they scattered free and far,
Like influence of some kind star.

His drama on the world's wide stage
Now in the last calm scene, old age,
Has been throughout legitimate,
In motive true, performance great.

Whoever thus fulfills his part,
Achieves the uttermost of art;
Who thus the stage of life has trod
Pleases the Manager—his God.

Or soon or late, *exeunt* all;
The bell will ring, the curtain fall;
And we, the actors, put away
The masking garments of the play.

JAMES E. MURDOCH.

When we from off the boards have passed,
And all the lights are out at last,
We'll leave the theater and go
Where real life replaces show.

Play out the play! and be content
To wait for that supreme event.
Dear Murdoch! master, father, friend!
The cast supports thee to the end.

JOHNNY APPLESEED.

A BALLAD OF THE OLD NORTHWEST.

L OUD calls arouse the pioneer ;
The puncheon door is shaken ;
“Awake ! the hour of doom is near !
Man, woman, child, awaken !

The scalp-knife in the moonlight gleams !
Away ! ere morn grows ruddy,
This night shall glow with fiery beams,
And flush with quiverings bloody !”

Alarumed by the warning word
The midnight herald utters,
The settler's wife, like mother bird,
About her young ones flutters.

JOHNNY APPLESEED.

The first-born, starting from his soft
Leaf-bed, the roof close under,
Glides down the ladder from the loft,
With drowsy eyes of wonder.

The pioneer flings open wide
The cabin door, naught fearing;
The grim trees gloom on every side,
Around the lonesome clearing.

“Come in! come in! nor, like an owl,
Thus hoot your doleful humors;
Your brain is cracked, my friend, to howl
Such crazy, coward rumors.”

The stranger stalked into the room;
That moment, through the ashes,
The hearth-fire struggled into bloom
Of gold and crimson flashes.

The flickering radiance lit a face,
And on a figure dartled,
So eerie, of so solemn grace,
The bold backwoodsman startled.

JOHNNY APPLESEED.

The brow was gathered to a frown,
The eyes were strangely glowing,
And, like a snow-fall drifting down,
The stormy beard went flowing.

The tattered cloak that round him clung
Had warred with foulest weather;
Across his shoulders broad were flung
Brown saddlebags of leather.

One pouch with appleseeds was packed,
From eastern cider-presses;
The other garnered book and tract
Within its deep recesses.

“Heed what the Lord’s anointed saith;
Hear one who would deliver
Your bodies and your souls from death;
Know ye not John the Giver?

“Thou trustful boy, in spirit wise
Beyond thy father’s measure;
Because of thy believing eyes,
Receive thou of my treasure.

JOHNNY APPLESEED.

“Of precious seed this handful take ;
Take next this Bible Holy :
In good soil sow both gifts, for sake
Of Him, the meek and lowly.

“Farewell ! I go ; the forest calls
My life to many labors ;
Wherever danger’s shadow falls
I fly to save my neighbors.

“I save ; I neither curse nor slay ;
I am a voice that crieth
In night and wilderness. Away !
Whoever doubteth dieth !”

He ceased, and vanished in the night,
Like some fleet ghost belated ;
Then, awe-struck, fled with panic fright,
The household, evil-fated.

They hurried on with stumbling feet,
Foreboding ambuscado ;
Bewildered hope told of retreat
In frontier palisado.

JOHNNY APPLESEED.

But ere a mile of tangled maze
Their bleeding hands had broken,
Their home-roof set the dark ablaze,
Fulfilling doom forespoken.

The savage death-whoop rent the air!
A howl of rage infernal!
The fugitives were in Thy care,
Almighty God eternal!

Unscathed by tomahawk or knife,
In bosky dingle nested,
The hunted pioneer with wife
And babes hid unmolested.

The lad, when age his locks of gold
Had changed to silvery glory,
Told grandchildren, as I have told,
This western wildwood story.

Told how the fertile seeds had grown
To famous trees, and thriven;
And oft the Sacred Book was shown,
By that weird Pilgrim given.

JOHNNY APPLESEED.

Remember Johnny Appleseed,
All ye who love the apple;
He served his kind by Word and Deed,
In God's grand greenwood chapel.

A BALLAD OF OLD KENTUCKY.

WELL, this is my story of Schoolmaster John,
And how, single-handed, he slew,
A terrible monster one May day at dawn,
When our staunch old Kentucky was new.

Full rude was the cabin, o'ershadowed by trees,
For the Lexington school-children made ;
For, Cadmus forbid that the shrewd A-B-C's
Be lost in the tanglewood shade !

Alone sat the pedagogue, throned on a stool,
Entranced by poetical lore ;
He waited and read, while the morning's breath cool
Floated in through the wide open door.

Bent over a magical page of the tome
That Vergil,—how long ago !—wrote,
He mused of Æneas and Dido and Rome,
When a tiger-cat sprang at his throat !

A BALLAD OF OLD KENTUCKY.

Fight, fight! John McKinney, or perish! He fought:
The conflict was deadly and long!
He uttered no cry; of the children he thought;
He felt that he strove with the wrong.

Now which shall be victor, the brute or the man?
Hands battle against teeth and claws!
Survive the dread struggle the nature that can!
Savage might against letters and laws!

The beast by the master was throttled and crushed
On his desk, while its fangs stung his side;
With the crimsoning rill from his pulses that gushed,
The leaves of his Vergil were dyed.

Who fly to the rescue? Who scream with alarm?
Three scared little maidens!—Then said
The schoolmaster, smiling, “No harm, dears, no harm!
I have caught you a wild cat;—it’s dead.”

And this is the story of pedagogue John
Of Kentucky, and how it befell
That, in the heroic old days that are gone,
He did what he had to do, well.

A BALLAD OF OLD KENTUCKY.

God set him his task in the woods of the West,
To teach and to tame what was wild;
To give his heart's love and the blood of his breast
For the good of the pioneer's child.

No story of Theseus or Hercules strong
More beautiful is, nor so true;
The meed of devotion to duty is song;
Then pay John McKinney his due.

LET'S SHAKE.

YOU thought you would take me, you say, by surprise!

You rascal! I knew you the moment my eyes
Lighted on your old phiz, Bill. I could n't mistake
Your voice nor your motions. How are you?

Let's shake!

You are a friend that sticks to his friend,
Living or dying, world without end;
Through flood and through fire I'd go for your sake.
Give us your hand here, old fellow,

Let's shake!

Don't it beat all? Now why did you wire
Me not to expect you, you measureless liar?
Come up to my den, and by jolly, we'll make
A night of it talking of old times—

Let's shake!

LET'S SHAKE.

How have you been? Let me look in your face;
Have you won, have you lost, in life's dusty race?
Have you knocked the persimmons and taken the cake?
No? Here is my wallet—we'll share it—

Let's shake!

Here is my heart,—it is truer than gold;
Hotter it grows as the world waxes cold;
Come, tell me your troubles, and let me partake
Your inmost perplexities, William,

Let's shake!

Tell me your sorrows and talk of your joys;
Do n't you remember the days we were boys?
What has become of Sam, Tom, Joe and Jake?
Shake to their memory, brother,

Let's shake!

Say, are you married, or are you in love?
Speak out, for you know we are like hand and glove;
I used to think you and Belle Esmond would wed.
Yes, yes, as I wrote you, the baby is dead;
I thought, for awhile, that my wife's heart must break;
Your hand, dear old comrade,—don't mind me,—

Let's shake!

LET'S SHAKE.

God bless you! I'm awfully glad you are here,
You must not make fun of this womanish tear;
'Twas only a baby, scarce two Aprils old,
But, William, I tell you they do get a hold
Of the heartstrings, these babies, and since ours went,
Why, somehow or other, we're not quite content
With this planet; but when all the worry and strife
Are over, I hope we may strike a new life
Up yonder, where hearts never hunger nor ache;
You'll give me your hand there, old fellow,—
We'll shake!

“DO YOU WANT ANY BOY?”

“D O you want any boy?” said a small, small lad,
Who had entered a big, big store;
But his face drooped low with a shade full sad,
When a gruff clerk showed him the door.

“Say what can you do, little man?” asked I;
Straight he looked in my eyes and smiled;
“Oh, I can do *any thing*, sir,—let me try!”
Said the eager and confident child.

Then a vague distress in my bosom grew,
For, in all the rich world wide,
Not a helpful task for his aid I knew,
And the smile from his features died.

As the brave, tiny gentleman strode to the street,
To seek for his fortune alone,
Marched along life's terrible battles to meet,
I thought—“If the child were my own?”

THE BOOK AUCTION.

“HOW much am I bid?” said the spry auctioneer,
“For the songs of a well-known bard?”
The bard *incog.* who was hovering near,
Looked up, and his breath came hard.

“I am offered a dime! just think of it, gents!
For these ‘Songs of the Dewy Dawn!’
Are you all done bidding? ten! ten cents—
Ten cents *and—going—and—GONE!*”

“You don’t know elegant books from trash!”
Joked the jubilant auctioneer;
The *incog.* author bit his mustache
And felt confoundedly queer.

“A beautiful copy of Shakespeare’s Pomes!
How much do I hear? look alive!
A right nice work to embellish your homes;
Five cents! sold to *cash* for FIVE!”

THE BOOK AUCTION.

The *incog.* singer twinkled his eye,
And inwardly said with a thrill;
“American poetry don’t sell high,
But I’d hate to go cheap as old Bill.”

THE OLD, OLD STORY.

“WE stabbed each other with a lance of pride—
Would it had been a blade of gleaming steel,—
Then with a single pang we both had died,
Nor suffered wounds that only death can heal.”

Thus did I verse, in hyper-tragic strain,
To her from whom my bleeding heart was torn;
Almira rhymed her soul's ecstatic pain
In answering stanzas bitterly forlorn.

But now, Almira has another beau,
And life to her is sweet as song can tell;
And, as for me, instead of courting woe,
I kiss the rose-red lips of Isabel.

GABRIEL OF SCHWARTZENWALD.

RHYME, and ring the changes well,
Sing the song of Gabriel,
Gabriel of Schwartzenwald.

Lo, a voice delusive called
From the Ohio's crooked vale,
Saying, Sail and sail and sail
Over the sea and hither away,
Westering to the Land of Play;
Happy region of Do-as-you-please,
Where the guilders grow on trees,
Where the peasants all are kings
And there be no underlings.

Gabriel, the idle dreamer,
Heard the Utopian voice alluring,
Sought a sail-ship,—not a steamer;—
Soon the vessel leaves her mooring,

GABRIEL OF SCHWARTZENWALD.

Veers and tacks to Occident,
Bears him o'er the crinkled sea ;
Never soul so indolent
Lounged upon a deck as he.

With the vagrant breeze he glides
Over sun-lit, moon-lit tides,
Skims to port and shore ;
Spins along the shining rail,
Sleeps into Ohio's vale,—
Wakes—the journey o'er.

Not an idler Gabriel sees,
Not a kreutzer on the trees,
Every bretzel must be bought,
Naught is proffered him for naught.
'T is the Region of Unrest,
Busy, toiling, moiling West !

All the peasant-kings he found
Building houses, tilling ground.
Gabriel of Schwartzenwald
From his dream is disenthralled ;

GABRIEL OF SCHWARTZENWALD.

Transatlantic, far away,
Eastward looms the Land of Play.

Like the lily, like the daisy,
Lolling Gabriel was lazy;
Clownish were his clumsy paces,
Ludicrous his slow grimaces;
Ill-defined the thoughts he spoke
Like the wreathed tobacco smoke
From his meerschaum upward shed
Curling round his shaggy head.
Little could he understand;
“Vish I vas in Faderland,
Nicht is goot for notings here
Only shust das lager-bier.”

Easily he wept or smiled,
Easily was he beguiled;
Rill-like, shallow o'er his mind
Ran affections swift and kind;
Secretly he shared his meat
With a lame cur on the street;
“Vonce I had a hund,” said he,
“Vat was very freund to me;

GABRIEL OF SCHWARTZENWALD.

Ya, meinherr, dat hund was mine ;
Vish I heard him barkin' here ;
Vish I had a glass goot bier,
Oder flash von German wein."

Hard by tranquil Crawfish Bayou
Where the gadding breezes cool
Loiter up from the Ohio,
Gabriel, at sink of sun,
Throned upon a wooden stool,
Fondled his accordion.
Then the ragged urchins round,
And their brown-legged sisters, maybe,
Lugging each a flax-haired baby ;
Sometimes, too, the weary mothers,
Yea, and I, and lingering others
By sad, dulcet quaverings won,
Gathered near to catch the sound ;
O'er the hill the risen moon
Paused to hear the mellow tune ;
All too sadly, all too soon,
Gabriel would cease to play,
Light his pipe and puff away.

GABRIEL OF SCHWARTZENWALD.

“Vas a Fraülein,” mumbled he ;
“Vish I vas to-night not hier ;
Not America for me,—
Only shust das lager-bier.”
“Play a waltz now, Gabriel!” “Nein.
Rhine wein ist der beste wein.”

Gabriel did sigh and sadden
For the linden shades of Baden,
For the glooms of Schwartzenwald ;
So a homesick brief he scrawled
To his mother, her to tell
That he was not strong or well.
(Of the Fraülein wrote he not,—
Haply Gabriel forget.)
Soon the doting mother old,—
Four-score were her years and three,—
Sent the lout a purse of gold,
With the summons—“Come to me!
Komm zu mir, mein Sohn, geschwind,
Komm zu mir, mein liebes Kind.”

From the Ohio's crooked vale
Flying fast by rail and sail,

GABRIEL OF SCHWARTZENWALD.

Home to Schwartzenwald away,
Eastward to the Land of Play,
Gabriel of Schwartzenwald
Followed the mother-tongue that called
From the father-land in tearful tone,
"Komm, Gabriel, mein lieber Sohn!"
Followed the mother-voice and the call
Of the nameless Fraülein, short or tall,
And the coaxing lisp of the linden leaves,
And the bark of a dog forlorn that grieves
For an absent master; the gurgle, too,
Of bottled grape-juice and foamy brew,
And the tweedle-dee of the fiddle gay
That leads to the dance on a holiday,
Followed his dreams and his memories,
Whirled with the sleeping speed of wheels,
Flew on the eager wings of the breeze,
Doubting of naught that his foolish heart feels,
Sure that the country of Do-as-you-please,
If any such ever is found upon earth,
Is the home of our mother, the land of our birth.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR :

BEGINNINGS OF LITERARY CULTURE IN THE
OHIO VALLEY.

FOOTPRINTS OF THE PIONEERS.

LET HIM FIRST BE A MAN.

JUNE ON THE MIAMI.

MELODIES OF THE HEART.

THE TEACHER'S DREAM AND OTHER SONGS
OF SCHOOL DAYS.





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